

STATE OF THE COUNTY



A NOTE FROM SCOTT D. JOHNSON, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

The state of our county is great and growing! As your County Administrator, it is my pleasure to serve this county and its citizens by being involved in all aspects of county government. This past year, we have made tremendous strides in taking our county's vision to the next level. In addition, to a revamp of our current operations, we eliminated the stale mission statement and pledge that has been in place for a decade and replaced it with a new set of core values. PRIDE is an acronym that we believe is the essence of what makes a great public servant --Professionalism, Respect, Integrity, Dedication, Excellence. We have also created a new, spherical organizational chart that requires our county departments and employees to work together better, cutting out bureaucracy. It is truly our desire to serve our citizens more quickly and efficiently.

Make no mistake, this is a team effort and as our county continues to grow, I will ensure that we do our part in providing our citizens with the best service possible. I take great PRIDE in serving you, the citizens of this county; it is an incredible place to live, work and raise a family!

LOCAL ECONOMY, FINANCES AND EXCELLENT CREDIT HISTORY

- Columbia County is currently in the top 100 of fastest growing counties in the United States (per the U.S. Census) and one of the fastest growing counties in the state of Georgia, seeing growth of 39.9% from 2000 to 2010 and 9% from 2010 to 2014 (124,053 to 139,257).
- Cherry Bekaert LLP, Certified Public Accountants, have conducted an audit and issued an unmodified ("clean") opinion on the County's financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2015.
- The County utilized only 9.52% of its legal debt limit for 2015, down from 12.49% in 2014.
- Columbia County currently holds a Triple A (AAA) Bond Rating from Fitch, making it one of five counties in the state of Georgia to hold such a rating and the only county outside of Metro Atlanta.

TRANSPORTATION

- Continue construction on the widening of Washington Road in Evans from a 2-lane rural/urban section to a 5-lane urban section with pedestrian and bike lanes.
- Begin Preliminary Engineering phase on major local and state routes in the county. The PE phase includes traffic analysis, database preparation, environmental studies, right-of-way plan preparation and roadway design.

The projects are:

- Lewiston Road – widen to 4 lanes with turn lanes and raised medians. Design to include a diverging diamond interchange at I-20. Includes pedestrian & bicycle facilities and street lighting.
- Stevens Creek Road – widen to 3 lanes with one lane in each direction with turn lanes and raised median. Includes roundabout at Evans to Lock Rd, pedestrian & bicycle facilities and street lighting.
- Hereford Farm Road – widen up to 4 lanes with turn lanes and raised median. Includes pedestrian & bicycle facilities and street lighting.
- Flowing Wells Road – widen to 3 lanes with one lane in each direction with turn lanes and raised median. Includes pedestrian & bicycle facilities and street lighting.
- Fury's Ferry Road – widen to 4 lanes with turn lanes and raised median. Includes pedestrian & bicycle facilities and street lighting.



– Hardy McManus Road – widen up to 4 lanes with turn lanes and raised median. Includes pedestrian & bicycle facilities and street lighting.

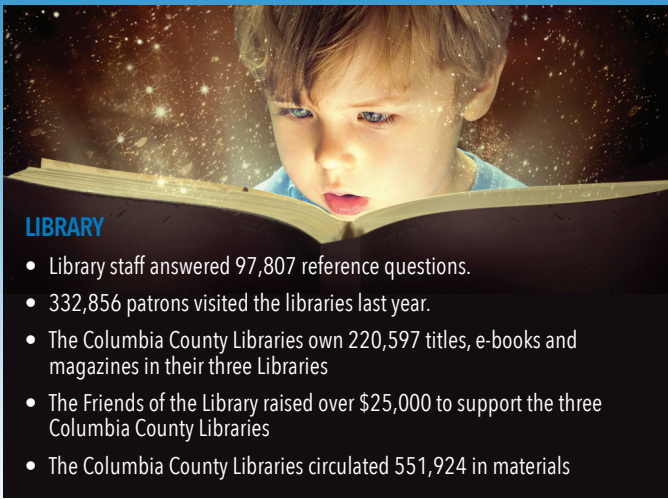
– Horizon South Parkway – widen up to 4 lanes with turn lanes and raised median. Includes pedestrian & bicycle facilities and street lighting.

ROADS & BRIDGES

- Completed 6150 work orders
- Maintain 35.24 miles of dirt roads
- Installed 2,062 ft. of sidewalk along Gibbs Road
- Installed school crossing and sidewalks for City of Grovetown on Harlem-Grovetown Rd. at Old Berzelia Rd.
- Relocate handicap ramps and school zones crossing on Hereford Farm Rd. at Evans Middle School
- Reconstructed speed humps on Braddock St.

TRAFFIC ENGINEERING

- Installed EMTRAC equipment for Emergency Vehicle Preemption/ Priority Control on 31 more signalized intersections throughout the county bringing a total of 47 intersections out of 66 with this capability.
- Added three (3) new stop and go traffic signals to the county traffic system (Riverwood @ William Few, Belair @ Colonial, & William Few @ Baker Pl.
- Finished completing the installation of InSync Adaptive traffic systems at all traffic intersections within Columbia County.
- Established nine (9) adaptive traffic signal control corridors.
- Completed the installation of PTZ pan/tilt/zoom cameras at thirty (30) stop and go signal locations bringing the total intersections having PTZ cameras to 46 out of 66.
- Completed the installation of RRFB (Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon) crosswalk flashing systems at seven (7) locations.
- Installed Internally Lit LED Street Light signs at eighteen (18) signalized intersections



LIBRARY

- Library staff answered 97,807 reference questions.
- 332,856 patrons visited the libraries last year.
- The Columbia County Libraries own 220,597 titles, e-books and magazines in their three Libraries
- The Friends of the Library raised over \$25,000 to support the three Columbia County Libraries
- The Columbia County Libraries circulated 551,924 in materials

PARKS AND RECREATION

- Lightning prediction systems installed at ETCF, Patriots, Riverside, Blanchard Woods, Blanchard
- New cardio and weight equipment added to Patriots Park Fitness Center
- Over 6,500 youth and 1,500 adults participating in sports and sponsored programs.
- Approximately 1,000 youth sports volunteers recruited, trained, and supervised
- Hosted numerous soccer, baseball, football, and lacrosse tournaments in county parks
- Wildwood Park hosted 30 regional and national events bringing in participants from across the country

- Reed Creek Park coordinated 36 nature education sessions and programs

RENTAL FACILITIES & VENUES

- Rental Facilities hosted more than 1,500 events accommodating more than 90,000 patrons.
- Hosted 4 regional Gun Shows at the Exhibition Center.
- Hosted many fundraisers for the American Red Cross, including 'Boot/Scoot N Boogie'.
- Hosted the Annual National Wild Turkey Federation fund raiser.
- Hosted the 2015 National Mustang Car Show – bringing patrons and vehicles from as far away as Alaska.

UGA EXTENSION SERVICES/4-H PROGRAMS

- Completion of facility renovations of large meeting room/classrooms/kitchen and new furniture, fixtures and equipment
- 7299 Agricultural questions answered through phone calls, emails and on site consultations
- Provided 768 hours of recertification credits for private/commercial pesticide applicators
- Provide weekly newspaper articles for the Columbia County News Times
- Provided 1080 presentations to elementary schools, middle schools and organizations
- Extension Services delivered 794 youth, family, and environmental programs with volunteers donating 1,841 hours
- Columbia County 4-H received \$47,400 in fund raising, grants and donations to assist in program implementation.

CONSTRUCTION & FACILITIES MAINTENANCE

- Completed the Blanchard Wood BMX Track and Skatepark facility
- Completed the construction of a Military Memorial Wall behind the Evans Library to honor servicemen and women.
- Completed the renovation and opened the new Tax Commissioner's satellite office in Grovetown.
- Completed construction of a new T-Dock at the Wildwood boat ramps.
- Made several improvements to the Euchee Creek Library and Senior Center including new stairs, new carpet, new doors, and new signage.
- Installed new scoreboards at Riverside Park
- Constructed a walking bridge at Wildwood to accommodate large archery tournaments.
- Constructed a new pavilion at the dog park in Evans Town Center Park.
- Completed the design of the new library to be built in Harlem.

- CC Code Enforcement received 1,952 complaints in 2015. The diverse nature of those complaints created an exponentially high number of actions, approximately 5,000 total in 2015.
- Single-Family Residential building permits have remained stable from the previous year, but has exceeded 1,000 permits per year since 2010.
- Commercial rezoning requests were up 170% in 2015 compared to 2014.
- The Planning Consultant completed the County's Vision 2035 Comprehensive Plan, under review at this time.
- There were 18 Preliminary Subdivision Plats brought to the Planning Commission for approval, for a total of 1024 lots.
- 30 Final Plats were taken to the Planning Commission for approval, a total of 802 lots.
- Released new online mapping website to enhance information accessibility for the public as related to property information, elected officials, county utilities, environmental, landmarks, and planning and zoning information.
- GPS'd 8,745 county assets and addressed 1,150 locations.

shelter in 2015

- Department works with over 40 Animal Rescue groups to enhance adoptions

Board of Elections

- Conducted 2 special elections in 2015 and 2 municipal elections
- Split two precincts to create a new precinct in Grovetown; notified affected voters in writing
- Over 4,914 new registrations were processed in 2015
- Processed more than 39,271 voter transactions and maintained the voter registration list for 94,791 registered voters

WATER RESOURCES

The following projects were initiated or completed in 2015:

- Reed Creek Water Pollution Plant upgrades- \$1,200,000
- Crawford Creek Water Pollution Plant upgrades- \$600,000
- Morningside Drive 5 Million Gallon Ground Storage Tank-\$2,500,000
- Baker Place Road Water Line- \$1,700,000
- West Lynn Sewer Relief Sewer- \$350,000
- High Meadows Booster Station Improvement: \$600,000
- Little River Water Pollution Control Plant Expansion from 6 million gallons a day to 12 million gallons a day- \$26,000,000

PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION

- Residential Building Permits issued in 2015 – 1,229
- Commercial Building Permits issued in 2015 – 49
- Residential Inspections completed in 2015 – 21,629
- Commercial Building Inspections completed in 2015 – 2,162

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Animal Services

- Columbia County Animal Services adopted/returned to owner 1259 animals in 2015
- Implanted 515 microchips
- 60 Community Outreach educational programs conducted
- 50 Volunteers/ community service workers utilized at

STORMWATER

Environmental Services

- Received 1,192 Notices of Intent for coverage of the NPDES Stormwater General Construction Permit
- Accepted 964 Notices of Termination of coverage of the NPDES Stormwater General Construction Permit
- Issued 68 Land Disturbance Permits
- Conducted 24,944 compliance inspections resulting in 1,072 Notices of Violation and 575 Stop Work Orders

Stormwater Operations

- Completed 582 Work Orders related to maintenance to the drainage systems
- Completed Watervale Drainage Capital Improvement Project
- Completed Rhodes Hill Drainage Capital Improvement Project
- Completed Quail Creek Drainage Capital Improvement Project
- Started Crickentree Drainage Capital Improvement Project
- Started Ronald Reagan Drive Drainage Capital Improvement

Stormwater Utility

- Added 2,723 parcels to the Stormwater Utility District



EMERGENCY AND OPERATIONS

- GEMA Officials presented the Columbia County Board of Commissioners the final ice storm reimbursement check in the amount of \$860,826 on September 11, 2015, which closed out our disaster paperwork and yielding a total of \$9,293,693.92 (or 92%) in reimbursement for ice storm disaster costs totaling \$10,135,000.
- Columbia County received a state and federal grant award totaling \$162,100 for the purchase and installation of emergency generators for the Columbia County Sheriff's Office Substation, Columbia County Fire Station # 12 on Columbia Road and Columbia County Fire Station # 15 on County Line Road.
- Columbia County received a state and federal grant award totaling \$62,375.00 for equipment upgrades for Columbia County's Mobile Operations Center.
- Emergency Services volunteers contributed a total of 2,247 hours during 2015 for emergency response, training programs and exercises.
- Emergency Services staff presented 24 emergency preparedness programs to 1,749 individuals for civic groups, churches, schools, neighborhood associations and nursing homes.
- Public Transit received \$366,019.06 in state and federal contract awards and provided 51,481 transit rides for Columbia County citizens.

BROADBAND UTILITY

- Fiber installation for the County's adaptive traffic control system was completed connecting 150 traffic devices.
- The C³BU network currently has 20 Gigabits of bandwidth capacity scalable to 100 Gigabits per shelf.
- C³BU currently has over 130 Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) connected including backhaul transport for the Public Safety P25 Phase 2 Radio System.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Sheriff's Office

- Overall crime rate from 2014 to 2015 is down 4%.
- In 2015, calls for service and officer-initiated calls totaled 251,775.
- Currently constructing the training classroom for the driving track where all county employees will receive training instruction.
- Trained 107 citizens on firearms use, safety and laws in six citizen's firearms classes conducted throughout the year.
- Interfaced with N-Dex, a national law enforcement data exchange which is an additional resource for solving crimes.
- Implemented TEXT 2 911 to provide additional access for emergency services via the four major cellphone carriers (Verizon, T-Mobile, Sprint and AT&T). Prior to this implementation, the hearing impaired only had access to 911 via the TTY which is attached through a land-line. TEXT 2 911 allows for mobile access. The Columbia County Sheriff's office became the 6th agency in the state of Georgia to go active.

Fire Services

- Columbia County Fire Rescue (CCFR) taught fire safety to 740 adults and 1491 children.
- Columbia County volunteer fire fighters worked 3228.53 hours.
- CCFR certified 69 citizens in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).
- There were 8 lives saved from CPR in 2015.
- CCFR answered 4367 calls for service.
- Joined the Sheriff's Office 800 Mgz Radio system to expand coverage, improve safety, and for interoperability.
- Merged Fire Dispatch with Columbia County 911 to reduce response times and increase access to resources.

GREEN GOVERNMENT/RECYCLING

- Our Recycling customers diverted 963.15 tons (1,926,304 pounds) of recyclable material from area landfills in 2015. That is a 13% increase from 2014.
- The E-Cycling program kicked off in August 2015. This program consists of breaking down computers and piecing out their individual components. Hard drives go through a 3 step destruction process to help ensure information security. Staff diverted 9,113 pounds of computer components from landfills and potential security breaches.
- Tires (passenger and large vehicle) were added to the accepted commodities list. Fees are charged based on classification.
- Ten miles of Columbia County maintained roadway has been adopted in our Adopt a Mile program.



AWARD WINNING GOVERNMENT

- Received Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from GFOA for the 17th consecutive year.
- Received Distinguished Budget Award from GFOA for the 7th consecutive year.
- All Six (6) of Columbia County's Treatment Facilities were awarded the Platinum Award for performance from the Georgia Association of Water Professionals, for meeting and exceeded all required parameters for at least five (5) consecutive years.
- The Sheriff's Office received the Advanced Meritorious Award under the Gold Standard of Excellence for reaccreditation.
- The Columbia County Sheriff's Office Communications Center received the Gold Standard of Excellence Award for reaccreditation.
- The Sheriff's Office is one of three Triple Crown accredited agencies in Georgia and one of 55 in the United States

- Staff Sgt. James Moss was named Deputy of the Year by the Columbia County Exchange Club.
- CCFR received the Lifesaving Valor Award from Ga Firefighters & Fire Chief's Association.
- Matthew Blessing named Firefighter of the Year by the Columbia County Exchange Club.
- 2015 Team of the Year for Columbia County was CCFR Fire Rescue, Shift 3, Engine Company 7, Terry Wright & David Germann.
- Brittany Lloyd with Columbia County Human Resources Department was named Employee of the Year for 2015.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

- Over 50 Events were held between Evans Towne Center Park and the Columbia County Amphitheater which included festivals, concerts, holiday festivities and family oriented activities. An estimated 200,000 people attended these events and countless others enjoyed the park facilities throughout the year.
- Some of the larger events that were held in 2015 worthy of note were Snowfest, Rock Fore Dough, Thunder Over Augusta, Papa Joe's BanjoBQue Music Festival, Fourth of July Celebration, Kiss Family Reunion, M*A*S*H* Concert, and Christmas in the Park & Tree Lighting Celebration

